

Master's Thesis Template - MLA Format (9th Edition)

Complete MLA-formatted thesis template. Replace bracketed text with your content.

TITLE PAGE

[Centered on page]

[Your Full Name]

[Advisor Name]

[Department Name]

[University Name]

[Date: Day Month Year]

[Skip several lines - approximately 1/3 down page]

[Full Title of Your Thesis:*

****Centered, Not Bolded, Title Case]**

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ABSTRACT

[Page number: iii]

Abstract

[Write 150-250 words summarizing your entire thesis. Include: research problem, methods, key findings, and main conclusions. Single paragraph, no indent, double-spaced.]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (Optional)

[Page number: iv]

Acknowledgments

[Thank committee members, funding sources, research participants, colleagues, family. Keep professional and brief. Double-spaced, 1-2 pages maximum.]

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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

[Opening paragraph: Introduce the broad topic and establish significance. No heading needed for first paragraph. All text double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-pt Times New Roman.]

Background

[Provide background information about your topic. Establish context and explain current knowledge. Use bold for section headings.]

[Continue with several paragraphs. Indent first line of each paragraph 0.5 inches. Double-space throughout.]

Problem Statement

[Clearly articulate the specific problem or gap that your research addresses. Explain why this problem matters and needs investigation.]

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. [Your first research question]
2. [Your second research question]
3. [Your third research question, if applicable]

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to [clearly state what you aim to do and achieve].

The specific objectives are:

- To examine [objective 1]
- To analyze [objective 2]
- To explore [objective 3]

Significance of the Study

[Explain who benefits from this research and how. Discuss theoretical, practical, and scholarly contributions.]

This research contributes to scholarship on [topic] by [contribution]. The findings have implications for [practitioners/policymakers/scholars] who [application].

Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on [population/context/timeframe]. The research examines [specific aspects] but does not address [what's excluded].

Several limitations constrain this study:

- [Limitation 1 and its impact]
- [Limitation 2 and its impact]
- [Limitation 3 and its impact]

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis comprises four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1 reviews relevant literature and theoretical frameworks. Chapter 2 describes the research methodology. Chapter 3 presents analysis and findings. Chapter 4 discusses implications and recommendations. The conclusion synthesizes key insights and suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

[Opening paragraph: Provide overview of what this chapter covers and how literature is organized.]

Theoretical Framework

[Describe the theories guiding your research. Explain key concepts and their relationships.]

According to [Scholar's] theory of [concept], [explanation of theory] (qtd. in [Source] [page]). This framework provides a lens for understanding [your topic] because [connection].

Figure 1. [Title of conceptual model in sentence case]

[Insert figure here]

Review of Related Literature

[Organize by themes, not by individual sources. Synthesize research across sources.]

[Theme/Topic 1]

[Discuss what research says about this theme. Synthesize multiple sources using present tense for general scholarly consensus and past tense for specific studies.]

Scholars have long recognized that [general statement] (Smith 45; Jones 78). Recent research demonstrates [finding]. For example, Martinez found that [specific finding] (234). However, Chen's study challenged this conclusion, arguing instead that [contrasting view] (89-91).

These contradictory findings suggest [your synthesis and transition to next point].

[Theme/Topic 2]

[Continue organizing by themes. Show how sources relate to each other and to your research questions.]

Research consistently shows [consensus]. Brown argues that [position], while Davis extends this by demonstrating [related point] (Brown 156; Davis 203-05).

Despite this scholarly attention, significant gaps remain. No studies have examined [your gap]. This is problematic because [why gap matters].

[Theme/Topic 3]

[Continue with additional themes as needed]

Summary and Research Gap

[Synthesize what literature reveals, identify specific gaps, and explain how your study addresses these gaps.]

The literature reviewed in this chapter establishes [synthesis]. However, [specific gap exists]. This study addresses this gap by [your approach], thereby contributing to scholarly understanding of [topic].

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

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Chapter 2: Methodology

[Opening paragraph: Overview of research approach and justification]

Research Design

This study employs a [qualitative/quantitative/mixed methods] approach to [purpose]. The research design is [ethnographic/case study/survey/experimental/etc.], which allows for [what this design enables].

This methodological approach is appropriate because [justification connecting design to research questions].

Participants and Sample

The study population consists of [describe population with specific characteristics]. The sample includes [number] [participants/texts/cases] [from where/which].

Sampling Method. [Describe strategy: purposive, random, convenience, etc.]

Inclusion Criteria. Participants qualified for inclusion if they:

- [Criterion 1]
- [Criterion 2]
- [Criterion 3]

Exclusion Criteria. [What disqualified participation]

Data Collection

Data collection occurred between [dates] through [methods used].

Instruments and Materials. [Describe each tool/instrument]

The primary data collection instrument was [instrument name/type], which [what it does]. This instrument consists of [description: number of questions, format, etc.]. The instrument demonstrates reliability through [evidence] and has been validated by [prior use/pilot testing].

Procedures. Data collection followed these steps:

1. [Step 1 - be specific and detailed]
2. [Step 2]
3. [Step 3]
4. [Continue with all procedural steps]

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis. [If applicable] Data were analyzed using [software name]. Statistical analyses included:

- Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) to characterize the sample
- [Specific test] to examine [research question]
- [Specific test] to determine [research question]

Qualitative Analysis. [If applicable] Qualitative data were analyzed through [method: thematic analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis].

The analysis process involved:

1. Transcription of all [interviews/recordings/etc.]
2. Initial coding to identify preliminary patterns
3. Focused coding to develop themes
4. Thematic analysis to understand meaning
5. Validation through [triangulation/member checking/peer review]

[Software name] facilitated coding and organization of qualitative data.

Validity and Reliability

[Explain measures taken to ensure study quality]

To ensure validity, this study employed [triangulation/member checking/peer debriefing]. Reliability was established through [inter-coder reliability/test-retest/internal consistency].

Ethical Considerations

The [University] Institutional Review Board approved this study (Protocol #[number]) on [date]. All participants provided informed consent after receiving information about study purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits.

Data confidentiality was maintained by [specific measures]. Participants' identities were protected through [pseudonyms/coding/secure storage].

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

[Last Name] 40

Chapter 3: Analysis and Findings

[Opening: Restate research questions and provide overview of findings]

Participant Characteristics

[Describe your sample - demographics, relevant characteristics]

Table 1. Participant demographics

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	[n]	[%]
Female	[n]	[%]
Age Range		
18-25	[n]	[%]
26-35	[n]	[%]

[Research Question 1]

[Present findings for first research question]

Analysis reveals that [finding]. As one participant noted, “[direct quote from data]” (Participant 3). This sentiment was echoed by multiple respondents who described [pattern].

[For quantitative results]

Results show that [finding]. The mean score for [variable] was [number] (SD = [number]), indicating [interpretation].

Figure 2. [Description of what figure shows]

[Insert chart/graph here]

[Research Question 2]

[Present findings for second research question]

The data demonstrate [finding]. Participants consistently reported [pattern], with [number or percentage] indicating [specific result].

Emerging Themes

Analysis identified three major themes:

Theme 1: [Name]. [Description of theme with supporting evidence and quotes]

“[Quote illustrating theme],” explained one participant (Participant 7). This perspective was representative of [number/percentage] who [described similar experience].

Theme 2: [Name]. [Description and evidence]

Theme 3: [Name]. [Description and evidence]

[Research Question 3]

[Continue presenting findings for each research question]

Summary of Findings

[Brief summary of key results - transition to discussion]

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

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Chapter 4: Discussion

[Opening: Restate purpose and overview of chapter]

Interpretation of Findings

This study examined [purpose]. The findings reveal [major insights].

[Finding 1]

[Interpret what this result means. Connect to literature reviewed in Chapter 1.]

This finding aligns with Martinez's argument that [connection to literature] (234). The result suggests [implication], which extends current understanding of [topic] by demonstrating [contribution].

However, this finding contradicts Brown's claim that [different finding] (156). This discrepancy may result from [methodological differences/population differences/temporal changes], highlighting the need for [future research direction].

[Finding 2]

[Interpretation and connection to literature]

The data's revelation that [finding] supports Chen's theoretical framework (89). This connection becomes significant when considering [broader implication].

[Finding 3]

[Interpretation and connection to literature]

Implications

These findings have implications for theory, practice, and policy.

Theoretical Implications. This research contributes to scholarship on [topic] by [contribution]. The findings challenge [previous assumption] and suggest instead that [new understanding]. This reconceptualization matters because [significance].

Practical Implications. Practitioners working with [population/issue] should consider [recommendation]. Specifically, [concrete application of findings].

Policy Implications. [If applicable] Policymakers addressing [issue] might [recommendation based on findings].

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations warrant consideration:

First, [limitation and potential impact on findings]. Future research might address this by [suggestion].

Second, [limitation]. This constrains [what cannot be claimed].

Third, [limitation]. Consequently, [interpretation caveat].

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on these findings and limitations, scholars should:

- Investigate [specific research direction] to [purpose]
- Examine [topic] in [different context/population]
- Employ [methodological approach] to address [limitation]
- Explore [related question] that this study raises

CONCLUSION

[Last Name] 68

Conclusion

[Provide synthesis - 2-3 pages summarizing the study's contribution and significance]

This study set out to [restate purpose]. Through [method], it examined [what was studied]. The research reveals that [key finding], which has important implications for understanding [topic].

The findings demonstrate [major contribution]. This matters because [significance]. While [acknowledge limitations], these results advance scholarly knowledge by [contribution to field].

Ultimately, this research suggests that [key takeaway]. As [relevant scholar] argues, “[relevant quote]” (page). This study's findings support and extend that claim by showing [connection].

Future research should continue investigating [direction], particularly focusing on [specific aspect]. Such work will further illuminate [topic] and contribute to [broader goal or benefit].

[Final sentence should provide closure and forward-looking perspective]

WORKS CITED

[Start on new page]

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Works Cited

[Use hanging indent for all entries] [Alphabetical by author last name] [Double-spaced throughout] [Follow MLA 9th edition format exactly]

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Journal*, vol. number, no. number, Year, pp. page range. DOI or URL.

Author Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year.

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Chapter.” *Title of Book*, edited by First Last Name, Publisher, Year, pp. page range.

Author Last Name, First Name, and First Last Name. “Title of Article.” *Title of Journal*, vol. number, no. number, Year, pp. page range.

[For sources with three or more authors, list first author followed by “et al.”]

First Author Last Name, First Name, et al. “Title of Article.” *Title of Journal*, vol. number, no. number, Year, pp. page range.

[For websites]

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Page.” *Title of Website*, Publisher/Sponsor, Day Month Year, URL.

[For sources with no author, alphabetize by title]

“Title of Article.” *Title of Source*, Date, URL or other location information.

[Continue with all sources cited in text]

APPENDIX A: [TITLE]

[Start on new page]

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Appendix A: [Title in Title Case]

[Include survey instruments, interview protocols, consent forms, or other supplementary materials]

[Double-spaced throughout]

APPENDIX B: [TITLE]

[Last Name] 90

Appendix B: [Title in Title Case]

[Additional supplementary materials]

MLA FORMATTING CHECKLIST

General Format

- 12-pt Times New Roman font (or similar readable font)
- Double-spacing throughout entire document
- 1-inch margins on all sides
- Last name and page number in header (top right)
- First line of paragraphs indented 0.5 inches

Header Format

- Last name and page number on every page
- Header 0.5 inches from top of page
- Right-aligned
- No punctuation between name and number

Title Page

- Centered on page
- Contains: Name, Advisor, Department, University, Date
- Title approximately 1/3 down page
- Title case (capitalize major words)
- No bold, italics, or underlining on title

Front Matter

- Abstract 150-250 words
- Table of contents with accurate page numbers
- Lists of tables/figures if applicable
- Acknowledgments (optional but common)

Body Text

- Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) starting with Introduction
- Bold headings for major sections
- No extra spacing between paragraphs
- Consistent heading style throughout

In-Text Citations

- Parenthetical format: (Author page)
- No comma between author and page
- For direct quotes: include page number
- For paraphrases: page number recommended
- Multiple authors: (Smith and Jones 45)
- Three+ authors: (Smith et al. 45)
- No author: Use shortened title ("Title" page)

Block Quotes

- Used for quotes 4+ lines
- Indented 0.5 inches from left margin
- No quotation marks
- Double-spaced
- Citation after final punctuation: (Author page).

Works Cited

- Starts on new page
- Title "Works Cited" centered, not bold
- Hanging indent (0.5 inches)
- Alphabetical by author last name
- Double-spaced throughout
- All in-text citations have Works Cited entries

Tables and Figures

- Numbered consecutively (Table 1, Figure 1)
- Table number and title above table
- Figure number and caption below figure
- Referenced in text before appearing
- Formatted consistently

Titles in Text

- Italics* for: books, journals, films, websites
- "Quotation marks" for: articles, chapters, episodes, poems
- No formatting for: websites as containers

Template Complete. Replace all bracketed content with your research. Good luck!